

# Wash. judge considers fate of sex offender files

The Associated Press

December 22, 2013 Updated 20 hours ago

Tri-City Herald

RICHLAND, Wash. — A judge in Washington state will soon decide whether the public has access to detailed records of low-level sex offenders.

The Tri-City Herald reports (<http://bit.ly/1fyigqJ>) that Judge Bruce Spanner heard arguments during a hearing Friday in Benton County Superior Court. He plans to make a decision in the coming weeks.

A Mesa woman, Donna Zink, has requested copies of records that include names, birthdays, phone numbers, pictures and other information for Level 1 sex offenders. Level 1 sex offenders are the most common and considered the least likely to reoffend, and law enforcement agencies say Level 1 registrants may be first-time offenders and that they typically know their victims.

Level 2 and 3 sex offenders have a higher risk of re-offending, and information about those people are regularly posted online by law enforcement agencies.

Zink said people have the right to know about convicted sex offenders in their area that may live or work near them. She received records from Franklin County, but Benton County officials notified the offenders, providing them a chance to challenge the release of the files.

Benton County Deputy Prosecutor Ryan Lukson agreed that the information is subject to public disclosure.

Lawyers on the other side argue that the sex offenders will face harm if the files are released. They also argued that the crimes for some offenders were committed many years ago and that the offenders believe they have paid their dues. They told the judge that the offenders still have privacy rights.

The lawyers representing the sex offenders also argued that the records at issue are investigative files used by law enforcement officers and exempt from public disclosure.

Information from: Tri-City Herald, <http://www.tri-cityherald.com>

Read more here: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/2013/12/22/2743094/wash-judge-considers-fate-of-sex.html#storylink=cpy>